

MARVEL

64

WAID
WIERINGO
KESEL

FANTASTIC FOUR



"Σππt'ΣΠ+"
PART 3 of 3

Pinco!
ISANOVE

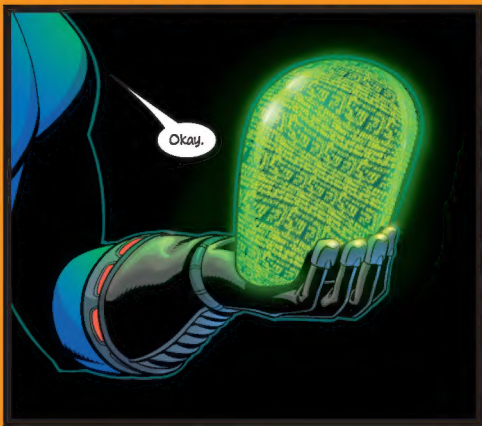
THE FANTASTIC FOUR

1 A team—and a family—of adventurers, explorers and imaginauts, the Fantastic Four live lives both ordinary—and extraordinary.

As of today:

2 The FF is under attack by a "living equation" named Modulus, an electrochemical creature capable of performing "arithmetic tasks" such as subtracting oxygen from the air or dividing Sue's hand into its component molecules. Modulus claims it loves Reed Richards—and has vowed to "subtract" anything that competes for Reed's affection.

3 Reed has found some cryptic but crucial importance in the realization that the formulas which comprise Modulus contain no equal sign. Somehow, using this information, Reed has determined the one way to defeat Modulus:



4 Reed must create the precise mathematical formula...for Reed Richards.



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writer

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penciler

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inker

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president

STAN LEE & JACK KIRBY
the prime equation

PART
3 of 3

STAN LEE PRESENTS
"Intt'ΣII+"



Let's
get to
work.





Much better. At least now we're not -- Wait. What people?

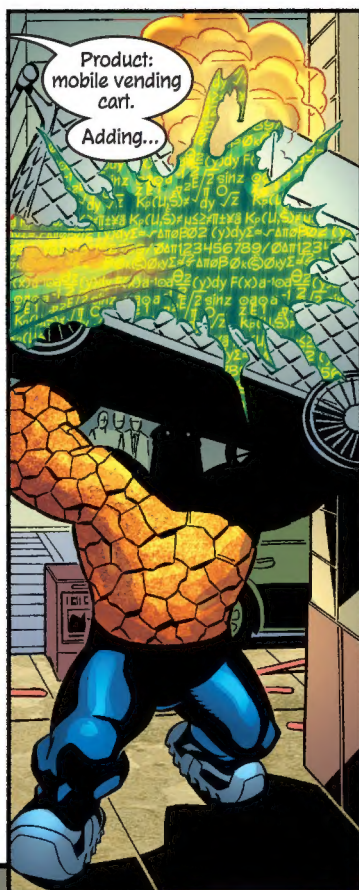


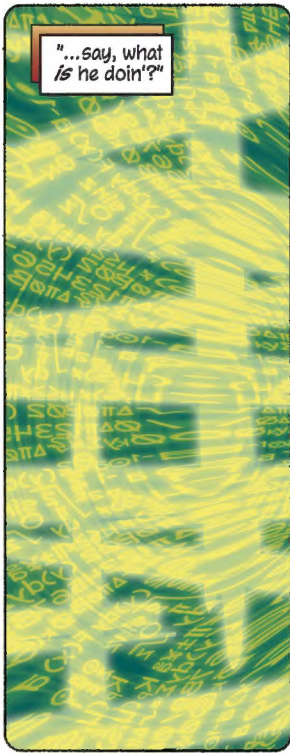
America. I been keepin' it from ya.

Hey, Pesky! Here's one with everything!



Product: concentrated heat energy.



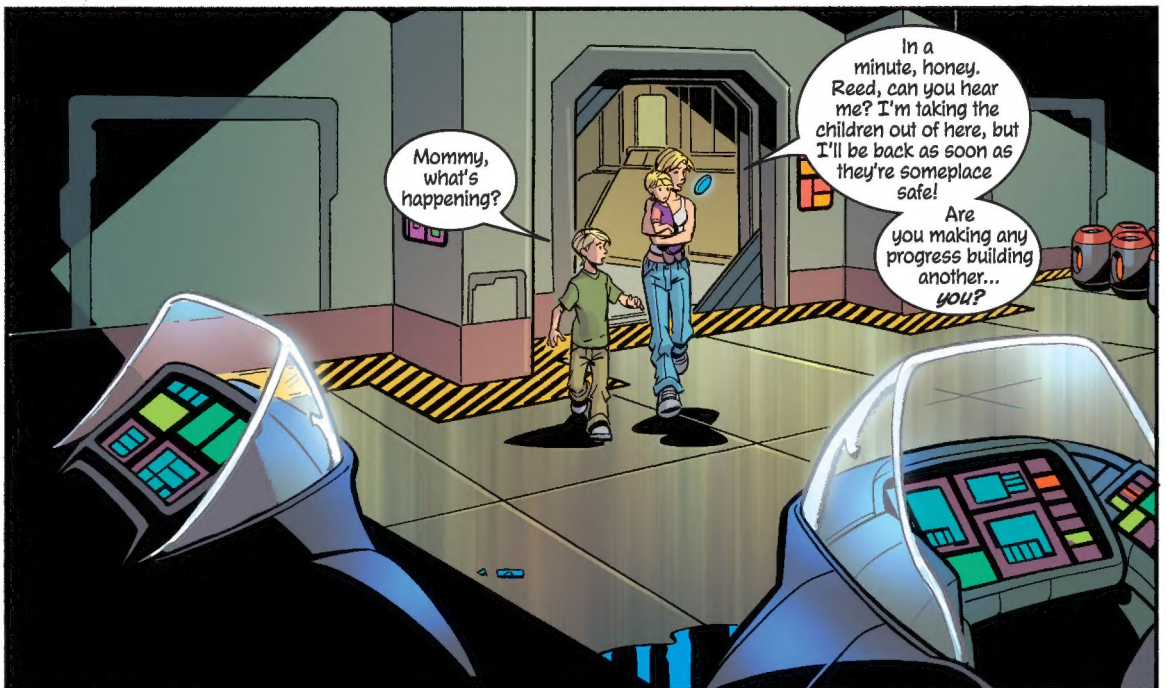


"...say, what
is he doin'?"



I told
Johnny I'd be
mad if he didn't
stop leaving these
commmlinks lying
around.

Wrong
again.



Mommy,
what's
happening?

In a
minute, honey.
Reed, can you hear
me? I'm taking the
children out of here, but
I'll be back as soon as
they're someplace
safe!

Are
you making any
progress building
another...
you?



Hard to tell. The calculations Franklin corrupted are here, but they're only a foundation. If only I had more *time*...

Understood. I won't interrupt. Signing off.

Wait! Can I carry a tune?

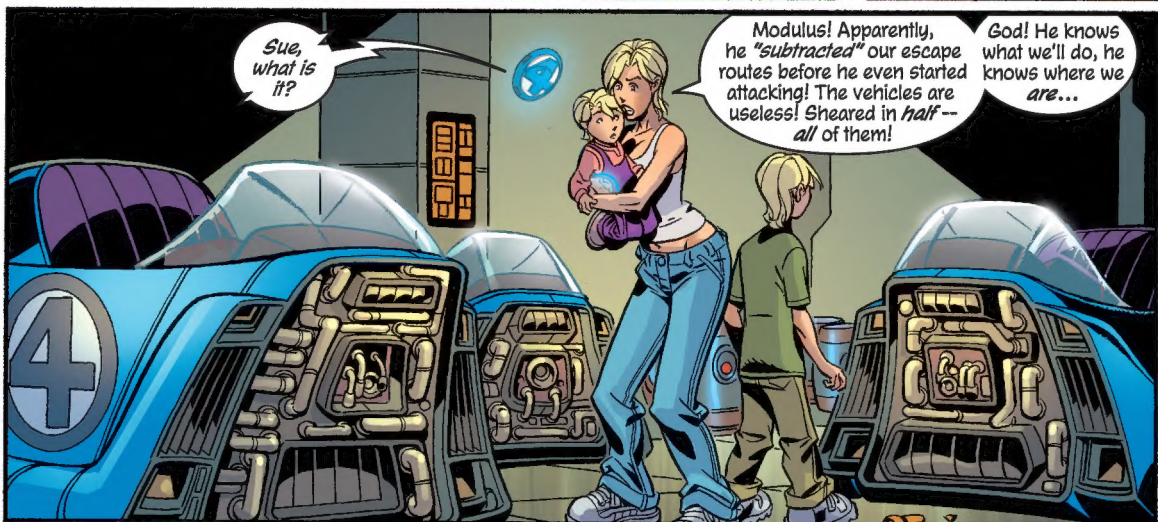


Not really.

Noted. Thanks.



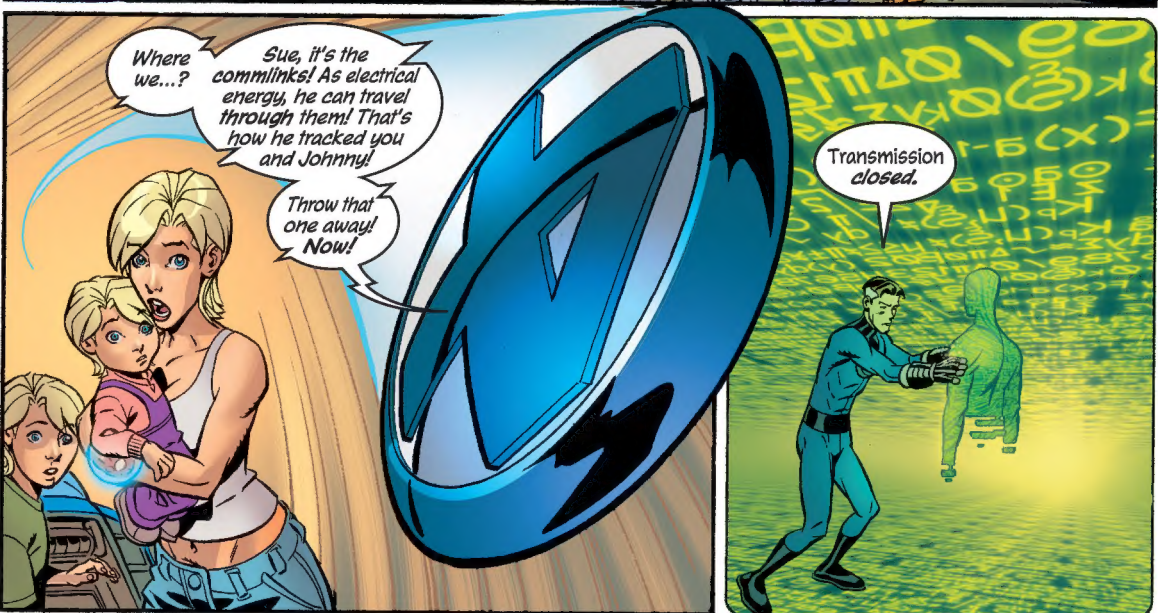
NO!



Sue, what is it?

Modulus! Apparently, he "subtracted" our escape routes before he even started attacking! The vehicles are useless! Sheared in half-- all of them!

God! He knows what we'll do, he knows where we are...

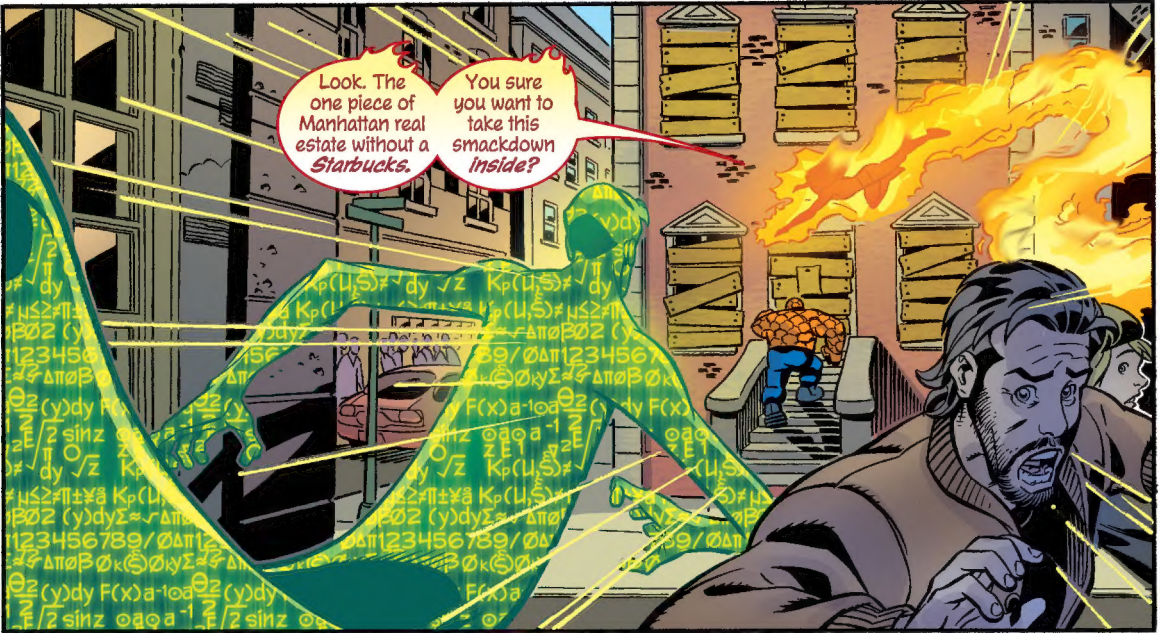


Where we...?

Sue, it's the comminks! As electrical energy, he can travel through them! That's how he tracked you and Johnny!

Throw that one away! Now!

Transmission closed.



Look. The one piece of Manhattan real estate without a Starbucks.

You sure you want to take this smackdown inside?



An' away from civilians? Well, yeah.



And when this Modulus guy brings this whole dump down on our pointy heads...?

Two story buildin'? Big deal. I lift sandwiches heavier'n that.

The real question, junior, is...



"...why ain't he takin' the bait?"

Product: structurally deficient edifice.

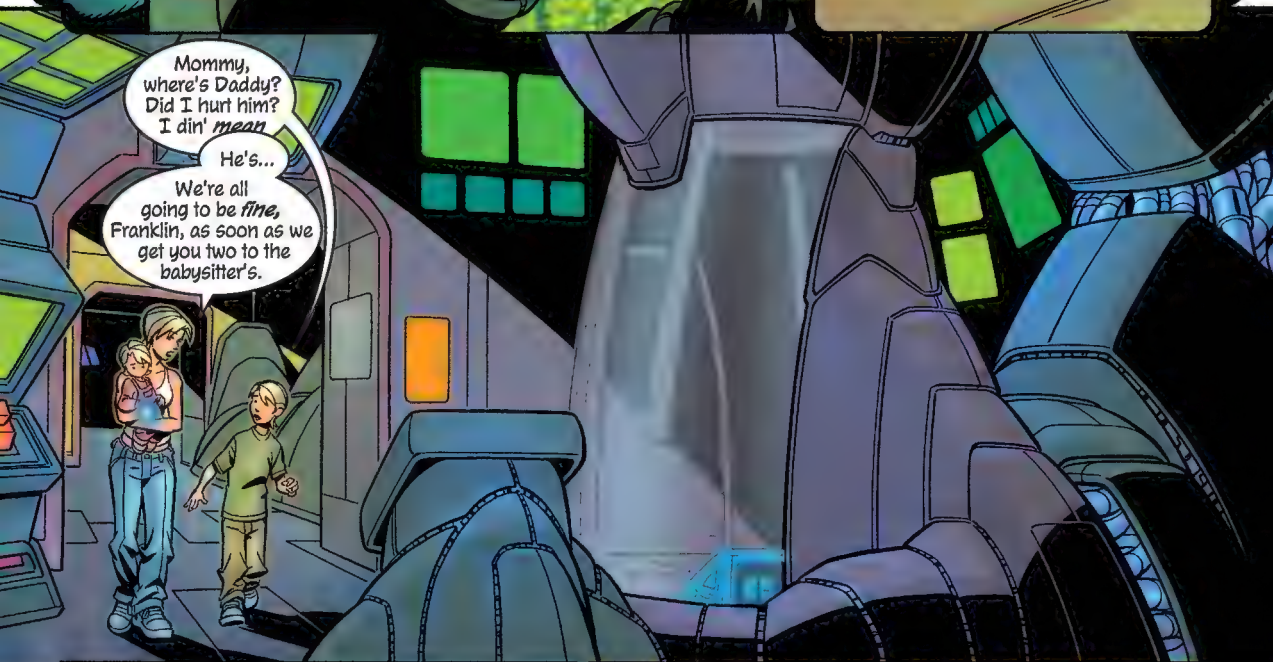
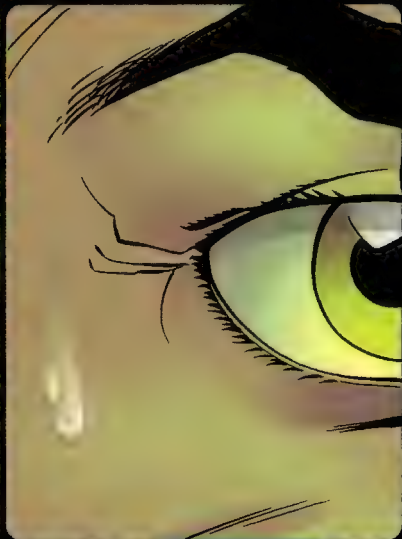
Levels: two.



Multiplying...



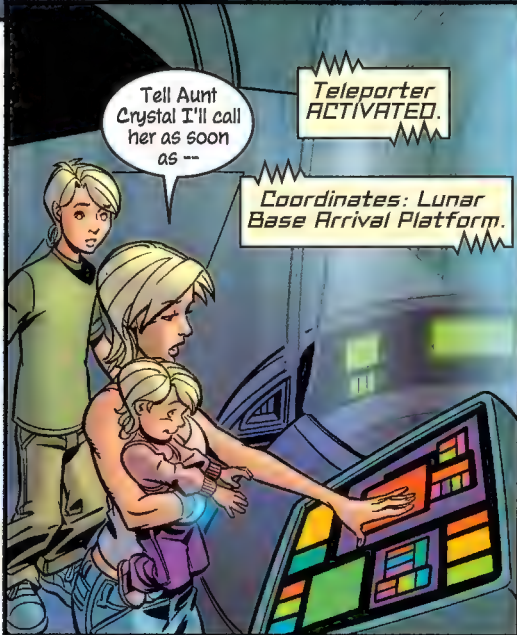




Mommy,
where's Daddy?
Did I hurt him?
I din' *mean*

He's...

We're all
going to be *fine*,
Franklin, as soon as we
get you two to the
babysitter's.



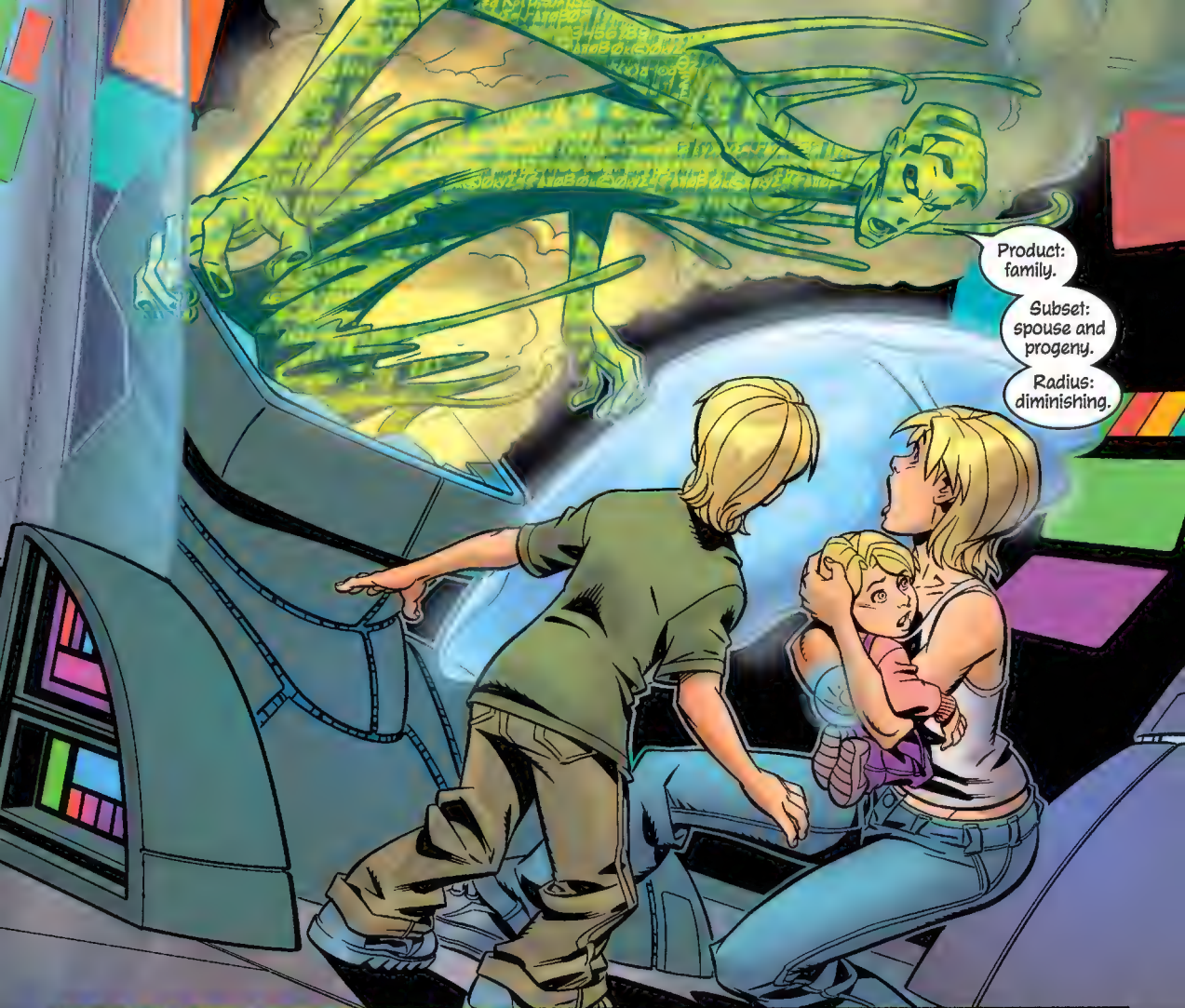
Tell Aunt
Crystal I'll call
her as soon
as --

**Teleporter
ACTIVATED.**

**Coordinates: Lunar
Base Arrival Platform.**



AAAAAH!



Product:
family.

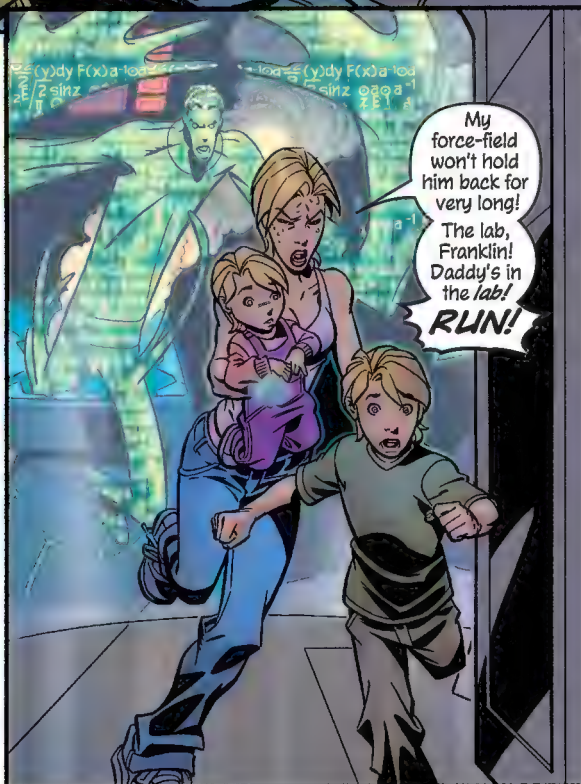
Subset:
spouse and
progeny.

Radius:
diminishing.

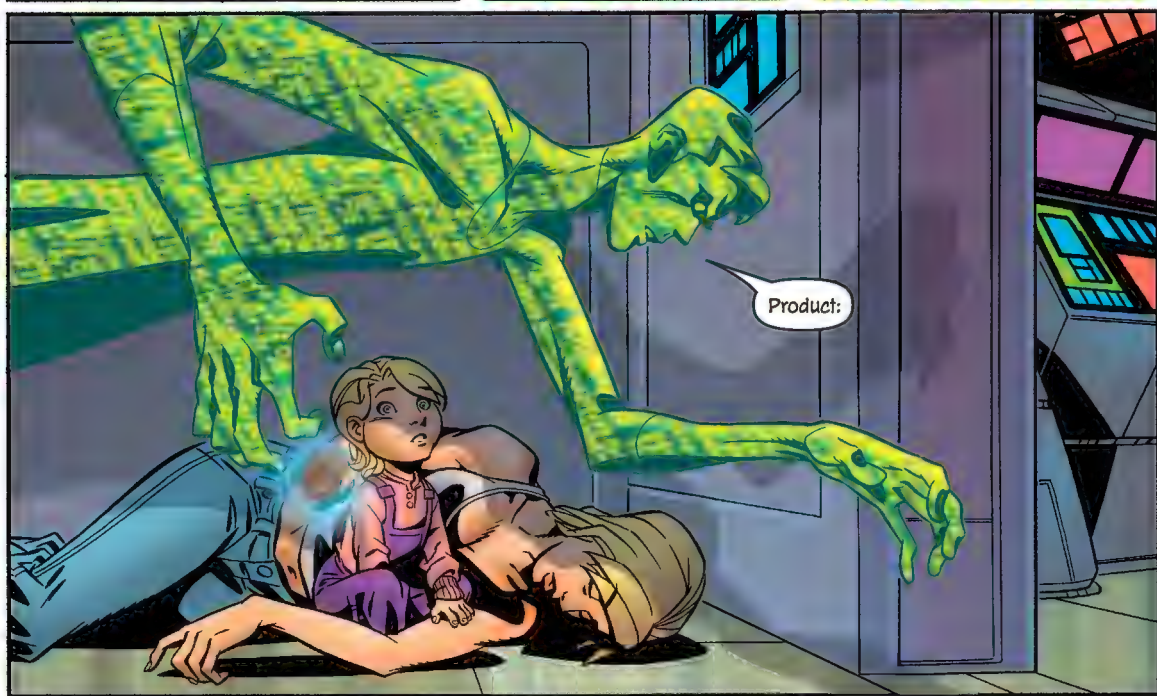


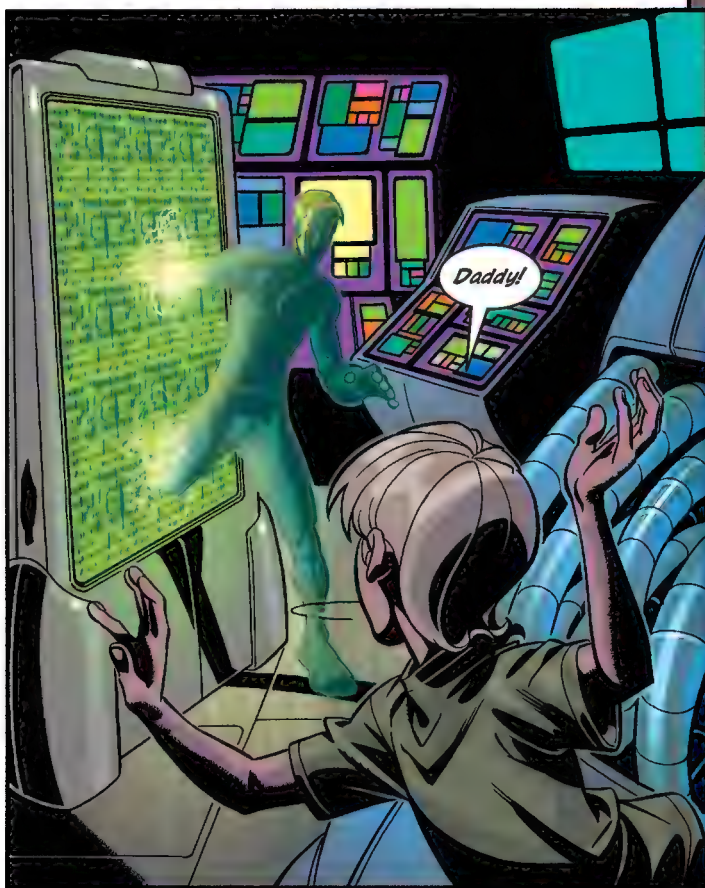
NOOOO!

**YOU STAY
AWAY FROM MY
CHILDREN!**



My
force-field
won't hold
him back for
very long!
The lab,
Franklin!
Daddy's in
the lab!
RUN!











How?
When you
"subtract" all the
things I care
about?

Then
you will love
only me!

It doesn't
work that way!
That you think it
does must *prove* to
you that the imbalance
between us is
incalculable!

You're
talking about a
critical -- and *elusive* --
variable that binds
carbon-based lifeforms
to one another!



"You cannot
divide it..."

C'mon,
squirt...wake
up...

nnNNnn...



"...you cannot
subtract it..."



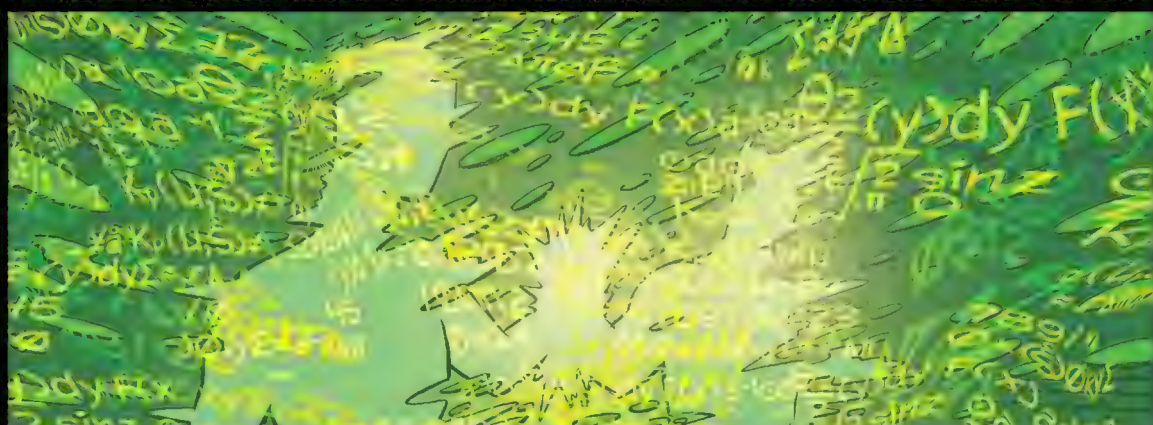
...because
it is indefinable
on your terms.
Unquantifiable.

I understand
your longing, Modulus...
but you will *never* know the
love I have for my family.



For
my son.







THOOM



Read!
Suzie! We
got here as
soon as
we --

?



Relax, you
two. I sent
Modulus
away.
He won't
bother us any
more.



Sue's hand. Unharm'd.
Thank God.

Umm...
didn't you used
to have a lab
here?

I'll have to
rebuild. Hope you're
managing our
money well.

Let's get
out of here.

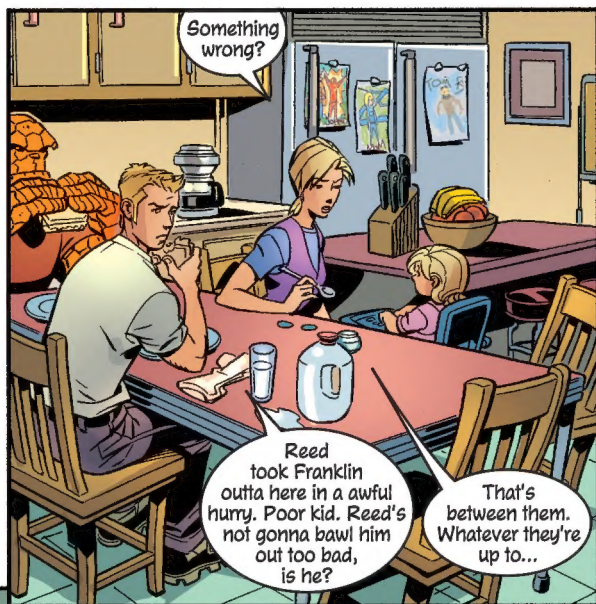


...so that's
how Reed...?
Ben, what's so
funny?

Math teachers.
They always said th'
stuff they taught'd be
important "later on in life."
I always told 'em to
blow it out their
ear.

Now Sue's
tellin' me our butts
were saved by
algebra.

Miz
Grimaldi,
wherever ya
are... I'm
sorry.



Something wrong?

Reed took Franklin outta here in a awful hurry. Poor kid. Reed's not gonna bawl him out too bad, is he?

That's between them. Whatever they're up to...

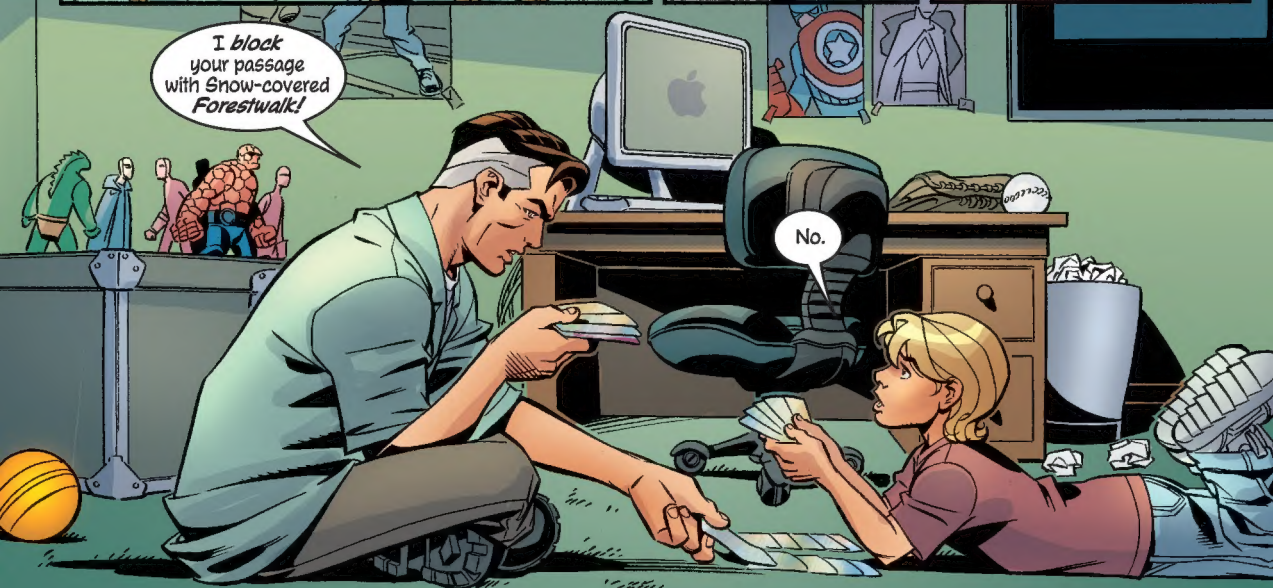


"...I'm sure someone's learning a lesson."

I told you there'd be punishment.



Bring it on.



I block your passage with Snow-covered Forestwalk!

No.



What do you mean, "no"? It says here --

Against the *rules*. Besides, my Clone plays as a copy of my Unstable Shapeshifter, which copied the *Quirion Elves*.

And your Balduvian has no counters, so until his ability resolves, he pays only one life. 'Kay?



Then the yield is an unstable fractal in the core dynamic of the game system! You're making this up!

Am *not*! Do I hafta explain it again?

No. You're a good teacher.

Thanks.

THE 4 END

4THOUGHTS

Welcome back to 4-Thoughts!
It's time to move on from your praise of our first issue...hopefully to your praise of our second issue!
But first:

Our own Mark Waid would like to take this opportunity to thank AGENT X scribe Gail Simone for a notion that eventually blossomed into "Sentient." He also owes her belated credit for the Queen of Fables, but that was another company altogether, so never mind. As you were.

Now, without further ado, on to the letters...

4-Thoughts,

I've done something in the past two weeks I haven't done in over 15 years. I bought the newest issues of the FANTASTIC FOUR. The 9-cent issue was a great idea, but I honestly wasn't expecting much. Of course, when I saw that Mark Waid was the writer I was intrigued. That issue was one of the best comic books I've ever read...period. And I've been reading since the 1960s.

Issue #61 was also terrific. Though not quite as good as the first issue I loved the little revelations, like Johnny being behind the Yancy Street pranks all these years. And I can't wait to see how he handles his new responsibilities.

Over the years my interest in comics has waxed and waned, but writers like Busiek, Morrison and especially Mark Waid keep me coming back.

Robert Farrell
(via e-mail)

Okay, so a little more praise for issue #60 doesn't hurt, Robert...and by throwing your thoughts on #61 into that mix, you've made for an even more ecstatic creative team!

We're glad that talented folks like Mark, Kurt and Grant have renewed your interest in comics. You won't believe what these guys still have in store!

4-Thoughts,

I've had one of those odd little moments in my life recently. I was just talking to someone about the Yancy Street Gang and the next day I pick up the latest FANTASTIC FOUR and what is the story about? That's right, the Yancy Street Gang and one of their classic gags, the old pie on a spring. When I saw that pie all over the Thing's face I was a bit thrown back, as I had just discussed the concept of the Yancy Street Gang with someone who had never heard of them. As a concept, or running-gag, it is a classic in the history of comics. It is a concept I have always loved. The Thing is in a way a celebrity, a super hero who spends his time taking on alien invaders, subterranean monsters,

giant robots, etc., and the thing that gets to him is a bunch of jerks back in the old neighborhood hassling him all the time. All you ever saw of them was maybe a couple of hanky-waving hands calling the Thing a sissy. Again, it is a real classic, so imagine my shock when it is revealed that the Yancy Street Gang gags are just from Johnny all along! There was a beauty to the Yancy Street Gang that can no longer be in the current storyline. I love the idea of a faceless group of guys who hang out on Yancy Street and rig up the odd boxing glove on a spring or squirting flower in packages sent to Ben. They are the constant thorn in his side. The Thing is the most human of the group, and his reaction to the Gang's insults proved it. Interesting plot twist as it was, I find myself longing for the days when those hanky-waving thugs from Yancy Street would let the Thing have it.

Britton Walters
(via e-mail)

Don't worry too much, Britton! The Yancy Street Gang is still alive, well, and quite real! Even if the boxes sent to Ben weren't really from those young hooligans, you can be sure the actual YSG are still plenty eager to hassle our blue-eyed behemoth next time he comes to visit the old neighborhood!

Just see FF #56 if ya don't believe me... And if you can't find a copy, look for that story (and this one as well) in the FANTASTIC FOUR: IMAGINAUTS trade paperback, coming this spring!

Hey guys,

I wanted to write to you and first state how much I love your comic! FANTASTIC FOUR has always been my favorite comic book and I have followed you guys for years! You have had many, many of the stories that I loved!

But I have a question concerning issue #61 and the Thing's casual destruction of NYC's property. The Thing is seen stomping through Manhattan, leaving huge potholes in the sidewalk, pushing pedestrians aside, and when the Human Torch comes along, he knocks Johnny into a wall (melting the wall and damaging a hair salon), wrecks a fire hydrant, and throws a cab at Johnny.

Now this is my question: how do the NYC authorities react to this "hero" acting in this fashion? Especially after 9/11! I could understand if it was caused in a battle with Doc Doom or the Frightful Four, but just because Ben is angry? It seems a bit irresponsible.

And will he just walk away from it? Will he just throw some money at the city officials and walk off? Do the city officials just say "Hey, that is okay...here is the fine/bill...pay up and we will be cool!"? If a normal man took a crowbar to the sidewalk, destroying it out of anger, he would be fined and jailed! If a normal man caused a car to crash into a hair salon, ruining the business as well as ruining peoples' day (one woman declared it was her wedding day!), he would be sued, fined, and possibly jailed. And if he stole a car (which Ben effectively did...it didn't matter what he planned to use it for, he STOLE it!) and then tried to run someone over (Ben threw it at Johnny for Pete's sake!) he would definitely go to jail!

I like Ben. I always wanted to be like Ben. But I wonder how the city authorities would react to this. In all fairness, I think Ben should not only be fined, but face jail time.

I know that in the past, Ben has acted in this fashion; however that was before 9/11. I guess now because of that event, I am more aware of violence in our world.

Anyway, if you can, please answer my question. I will continue to read the FANTASTIC FOUR for years to come!

John Jones
Miamisburg, OH

Good point, John. Ben may have the money to cover the damages, but that sure doesn't excuse his recklessness during the course of that issue! We were as astonished as you were—and I've gotta say, Bashful Benji was a bit embarrassed as well. Needless to say, the Grimm one will be putting in some voluntary community service time (between issues) to make up for his outrageous actions.

Dear Marvel,

I would like to make an announcement. Archie's back!

The image of Johnny Storm at the conclusion to #61 reminded me so much of Archie Andrews that it was almost scary. I am now left to wonder if I enjoy Johnny's character these days, however.

On learning he was responsible for all the pranks on Ben, all I could think of during the issue was, "why doesn't he just grow up?"

But then again, having Johnny grow up would be like having Archie make a final choice between Betty and Veronica. And we all know that's never going to happen.

Maarten Bouw
Melbourne, Australia

No choice, my friend. It's all about the Betty.

But seriously...he may not be an Archie, but our Johnny sure does have some growing up to do—and quick! Be sure to check out part 1 of the 2-part "Small Stuff/Big Stuff" next issue (featuring guest artist Mark Buckingham) to see what I mean!

4-Thoughts,

One comment, and one comment only:

If you'd have bet me last year that right now FANTASTIC FOUR would be my favorite comic book...I'd have lost my shirt.

After 25 years, there are still some wonderful stories to tell. Thank you.

David Tedeschi
Staten Island, NY

Thank you, David! Hope we have you saying the same thing a year from now...heck, make that 25 years from now!

But let's not get ahead of ourselves...we still have to get through next month! See you then!

Marc Sumerak
Yancy Street Dropout



Cover colored by Richard Isanove

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NEXT ISSUE:
THE FF IS IN FOR BIG TROUBLE...AND IT'S ALL JOHNNY'S FAULT? FIND OUT IN THE FIRST PART OF "SMALL STUFF/BIG STUFF!"